

# Tamara A. King

Operating Budget Written Testimony FY 2024

April 10, 2023

Dear Council Chair and Members of Council:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony in support of additional funding of the Community Mediation of Maryland in schools K-12 to assist in conflict intervention for suicide prevention and/or substance abuse; school programming for meditation/yoga class in partnership with Willow Street Yoga or it's likeness as a physical education alternative.

My name is Tamara King, a Silver Spring, Maryland, Montgomery County, District 20 resident. I am a single parent household, with a daughter aged 17, Jade Brown who graduated a year early from Montgomery Blair High School and son, age 4, Noble King, who attends Takoma Park Elementary. Last year, my daughter loss a friend from school to suicide along with her grandfather in the same week. While secretly being bullied in school by an anonymous caller for three months. Though her grades were not as affected, she began self-medicating with marijuana, self-harming and developed panic attacks. The school's partnership with YMCA had a 6-month+ waiting list for therapy service and a even longer waitlist county wide for behavior health provider through insurance. I eventually located a therapist in Baltimore, MD 4 months since first panic attack; a local Yoga studio who sponsored 10 free classes (Willow Street Yoga) in the interim of locating a therapist; and Community Mediation of Maryland, founded by, Maryland delegate Lorig Charkoudian where Jade was able to pick up mediation skills and volunteer during her gap year before beginning college Fall 2023. Community mediation and Yoga gifted me with transparent communication with my introverted teenager and a healthy alternative to at risk behavior!

Since children spend more time at school during the week than home, creating an environment at home and in school with trained adults who can be diligent in identifying suicide ideation behavior can be a precursor to introduce youth with strategies such as mediation or meditation/yoga to cope with intruding thoughts and pinpoint mental health triggers sooner than later. *CDC statistically says:*

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death and disability in individuals aged 10-34; and fourth for ages 35-44 years.
- Almost a quarter (23.4%) of high school students identifying as lesbian, gay, or bisexual reported attempting suicide in the prior 12 months. This rate is nearly four times higher than the rate reported among heterosexual students (6.4%)
- the Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention of Maryland, cited in comparison to other states, has a significantly the highest proportion of opioid deaths that are classified by the medical examiner as undetermined manner.<sup>1</sup> However, epidemiologists have shown that a significant proportion of undetermined overdose

deaths are likely intentional suicides. Thus, of 1,683 undetermined overdose deaths in Maryland in 2018, approximately 546 of the overdoses are likely to have been suicides.

To raise a child, a village is needed as psychological and emotional back up support. Parental involvement and effective school management help students' socioemotional wellbeing when they work simultaneously together. Implementing mindfulness meditation and mediation techniques can reduce suicidal ideation, foster reasons to live, and help youth address problems.

Warm Regards,

**Tamara A. King**  
*Parent Advocate*